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Forgotten Heritage: The Use and Future of Military Heritage Assets in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Frequently seen in former British colonies, an oft forgotten yet ubiquitous form of urban heritage is retired military architecture and structures. For the former colony of Hong Kong, which was greatly shaped by the military influence and presence there, these heritage assets are an important part of the city's history and represent a significant part of its development. Such architecture presents an interesting challenge for conservationists looking to find appropriate new uses for these simple utilitarian structures, which often have inherent accessibility, design and/or size restrictions due to their military usage. Hong Kong has numerous former military structures that have been given a new lease of life through thoughtful and innovative adaptive reuse. However, there are still other such structures that have been left abandoned, which are in need of attention and care. This paper examines the typical British military architectural typologies surviving from colonial Hong Kong with examples of their successful adaptive reuse. Such military structures include former barrack buildings, batteries, Commander's quarters, explosives magazines and ordnance stores. It is hoped that through such a study of the successful revitalisation of these heritage assets, suggestions can be made and inspiration given for the eventual use of other surviving military structures distributed not just throughout Hong Kong, but also other areas in the region.

Keywords: Hong Kong; urban heritage; military architecture; conservation; adaptive reuse; revitalisation